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Towards a Theory of Vivid Description as Practiced in Cicero's *Verrine* Orations*

Abstract: Ancient Roman rhetoricians do not offer a systematic theory of vivid description in their rhetorical treatises, perhaps because it was treated at the early stages of a student's education and because it may be produced in various ways to achieve various purposes. After examining the references to vivid description scattered throughout ancient rhetorical treatises in discussions of style, amplification, narration, and proof, as well as Cicero's use of the technique in the *Verrine* orations, I suggest precepts which may have guided the means by and ends for which vivid descriptions are produced.

Quintilian declares that Cicero "eminent" in the technique of vivid description, which he illustrates with a passage from Cicero's *In Verrem*.¹ Although Quintilian and other ancient Roman rhetoricians consider vivid description in their rhetorical treatises, they do not give it full theoretical treatment; neither its ends nor the means of producing it are presented thoroughly or systematically. This study attempts to begin filling this gap by examining the theory and practice of vivid description in ancient Rome. The discussion of theory will be derived from Roman

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¹Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. H. E. Butler, 4 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921), VIII.iii.64. Subsequent citations will be provided in parentheses in the text.

rhetorical treatises and of practice from Cicero's *Verrine* orations.²

This study first summarizes the theoretical treatment of the technique in the treatises and attempts to account for its incomplete and unsystematic presentation. Next, it justifies the *Verrine* orations as sources for generalizations about the nature of vivid description in persuasive discourse. Finally, it identifies the recurrent patterns or uses of language in the vivid descriptions of the *Verrine* orations in an attempt to explicate how vivid description achieves rhetorical ends. The purpose of this study is to suggest what precepts Cicero might have offered given both the discussions of vivid description scattered throughout the treatises in sections on style, amplification, narration, and proof, and Cicero's use of the technique in the *Verrine* orations.

"Vivid description" is used here to denote several related techniques referred to in discussions of style in the rhetorical treatises, all of which involve primarily literal uses of language³

²The following editions of the treatises will be used: *Ad Herennium*, trans. Harry Caplan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Cicero's *De inventione*, trans. H. M. Hubbell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949); *De oratore*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942); and *De partitione oratoria*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942). Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* will also be included in the discussion. The following edition of Cicero's *Verrine* orations will be used: trans. L. H. G. Greenwood, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935). Citations of these works will be provided in parentheses in the text.

³Figurative uses of language, particularly simile and metaphor, may also be designed to promote visualization. Though one end of these figures identified in the treatises is to produce vivacity (*Ad Herennium*, IV.xxxiv.45; *De oratore*, III.xl.160; *Institutio oratoria*, VIII.vi.19), these figures involve a kind of transference or substitution (*De oratore*, III.xxxviii.156, III.xxxviii.159; *Institutio oratoria*, VIII.vi.8) and comparison (*Ad Herennium*, IV.xlviii.61, IV.xlix.62; *De oratore*, III.xl.161, III.xli.163). Rather than producing vivacity mediately through substitution or comparison, vivid description primarily produces vivacity immediately through a literal account of a scene. Vivid description may include similes and metaphors but employs figurative language only infrequently. As will be discussed below, vivid description was a somewhat suspect technique which speakers had to disguise at times. Consequently, they may have been wary about using more apparent stylistic features such as simile and metaphor. This would account for the infrequent use of figurative language in vivid descriptions. Because simile and metaphor involve a different mental operation from direct description, and because figurative language is used sparingly in vivid descriptions, the contribution of simile and metaphor to vivacity deserves treatment as a separate topic.

designed to promote visualization of a scene.⁴ Quintilian lists the technique as an ornament and identifies it by the Greek term *enargeia* (VIII.iii.67). The *Ad Herennium* labels it in two ways: *descriptio*, an account in “clear, lucid” (“perspicuam et dilucidam”; IV.xxxix.51) language of the consequences of an act; and *demonstratio*, an account in language which causes “the subject to pass vividly before our eyes” (“res ante oculos esse videatur”; IV.lv.68) not only of what happened after an act but also what happened before and during it. These accounts of vivid description feature visualization of a scene—the end of vivid description viewed as a stylistic ornament.

In its discussion of *descriptio*, the *Ad Herennium* mentions a further end of vivid description—arousing pity and indignation (IV.xxxix.51). Moreover, it alludes to the technique in discussing the commonplaces of amplification; it describes the tenth *locus* designed to stir indignation as a place in which the speaker “examine[s] sharply, incriminatingly, and precisely, everything that took place in the actual execution of the deed and all the circumstances that usually attend such an act, so that by enumeration of the attendant circumstances the crime may seem to be taking place and the action to unfold before our eyes” (“omnia quae in negotio gerundo acta sunt quaeque rem consequi solent exputamus acriter et criminose et diligenter, ut agi res et geri negotium videatur rerum consequentium enumeratione”; II.xxx.49). Though in *De inventione* Cicero does not offer a theory of style,⁵ he describes the tenth *locus* for arousing *indignatio* in similar terms (I.lv.104) and the fifth *locus* for arousing pity in *conquestio* as one “in which all the misfortunes are presented to view one by one, so that the auditor may seem to see them, and may be moved to pity by the actual occurrence, as if he were present, and not by words alone” (“per quem omnia ante oculos singillatim incommoda ponuntur, ut videatur is qui audit

⁴Quintilian lists techniques related to vivid description: *sub oculos subiectio*, *subieciimus evidentiae*, *hypotyposis* (IX.ii.40), and *endiatyposis* (IX.ii.41). This paper attempts to follow Quintilian in only making divisions insofar as they are useful. It distinguishes vivid description from other stylistic devices that may promote visualization such as simile, metaphor, and—as will be discussed below—apostrophe, but does not provide distinct labels for the use of the technique to describe events with varying degrees of vivacity, events occurring in different time frames, etc.

⁵In *De oratore*, however, Cicero lists *descriptio* as a kind of embellished language used for amplification (III.liii.205).

videre et re quoque ipsa quasi adsit non verbis solum ad misericordiam ducatur"; I.lv.107).

In this early work Cicero also mentions the use of vivid description in discussions of the proof. He recommends its use by the defense in *relatio criminis* to arouse indignation and blame someone else for a crime (II.xxviii.83). In addition, he identifies the third common topic of *comparatio* used by the defense as a place "in which by a vivid verbal picture the event is brought before the eyes of the audience, so that they will think that they too would have done the same if they had been confronted with the same situation and the same cause for action at the same time" ("per quem res expressa verbis ante oculos eorum qui audiunt ponitur, ut ipsi se quoque idem facturos fuisse arbitrentur, si sibi illa res atque ea faciendi causa per idem tempus accidisset"; II.xxvi.78). This passage suggests that vivid description can be used to promote identification with or sympathy for the actors in a scene for the purpose of justifying some deed.

Cicero's discussions in his later works of vivid description as a stylistic technique offer a more sophisticated account of its rhetorical nature. In *De oratore* Cicero observes that a great impression is made by dwelling on a single point, and also by clear explanation and "almost visual presentation of events as if practically going on—which are very effective both in stating a case and in explaining and amplifying the statement, with the object of making the fact we amplify appear to the audience as important as eloquence is able to make it" ("nam quasi gerantur sub aspectum paene subiectio, quae et in exponenda re plurimum valent et ad illustrandum id quod exponitur et ad amplificandum, ut eis qui audient illud quod augebimus quantum efficere oratio poterit tantum esse videatur"; III.liii.202). Vivid description, then, may be used to amplify the narration in order to explain and emphasize important events or circumstances.

In *De partitione oratoria* Cicero discusses vivid description as a feature of the brilliant style. He observes that "it is this department of oratory which almost sets the fact before the eyes—for it is the sense of sight that is most appealed to, although it is nevertheless possible for the rest of the senses and also most of all the mind itself to be affected" ("est enim haec pars orationis quae rem constituat paene ante oculos, is enim maxime sensus attingitur: sed

ceteri tamen, et maxime mens ipsa moveri potest"; vi.20). Here Cicero considers vivid description in perhaps the broadest possible way: as a technique which can appeal to all senses and affects the mind. The nature of a possible effect on the mind may be inferred from Cicero's discussion of amplification later in the work. Cicero observes that amplification is used more to influence than prove (viii.27), to "win credence in the course of speaking by arousing emotion" ("motu animorum conciliet in dicendo fidem"; xv.53). These passages affirm the rhetorical nature of vivid description; it does not simply ornament but contributes to persuasion.⁶

While the rhetorical ends of vivid description identified so far—arousing emotion, promoting identification, and explaining and emphasizing importance in the narration—are perhaps primarily relevant to discussion of an issue of quality (*constitutio generalis*), the treatises also suggest that vivid description may contribute to discussion of an issue of fact (*constitutio coniecturalis*). That is, visualizing events may create belief that the events occurred and were of the nature described. In discussing the style of the narration, Quintilian notes that "a powerful effect may be created if to the actual facts of the case we add a plausible picture of what occurred, such as will make our audience feel as if they were actual eyewitnesses of the scene" ("multum confert adiecta veris credibilis rerum imago, quae velut in rem praesentem perducere audientes videtur"; IV.ii.123). Though in this passage Quintilian wants to suggest how style can please the audience, it may also be inferred that vivid description can lead the audience to believe events occurred which may in fact have not. That is, vivid description may lend a kind of credibility or plausibility to narration.

How vivid description may contribute to plausibility is suggested by Cicero in *De partitione oratoria*, where he observes that one kind of argument regarding probable events is to refer to "the mere indications of an action, for instance a weapon, blood, a cry, a

⁶As Ann Vasaly has put it, "vivid description in Ciceronian oratory was always part of an overall strategy meant to lead an audience to a predictable emotional and intellectual stance vis-à-vis the particular subject at issue before them, whether their role was as jurors, voters, or simply members of the body politic" (*Representations: Images of the World in Ciceronian Oratory* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993], p. 104).

stumble, change of colour, stammering, trembling, or anything else that can be perceived by the senses: also some sign of preparation or of communication with somebody, or something seen or heard or hinted later on" ("facti vestigiis . . . ut telum, cruor, clamor editus, titubatio, permutatio coloris, oratio inconstans, tremor, ceterorum aliquid quod sensu percipi possit; etiamsi praeparatum aliquid, si communicatum cum aliquo, si postea visum, auditum, indicatum"; ix.39). Amplifying circumstantial evidence through vivid description may create belief that what these signs point to actually occurred.⁷ Quintilian may have this in mind when he notes that a vivid description may provide enough information for the audience to supply details that the speaker does not describe (VIII.iii.64). Belief in the inferences drawn from events described by the speaker may become even stronger when imagined by the audience, because the audience participates in the making of the narration.

Though the treatises contain useful material on the ends of vivid description, little is said about its means—the language used to promote visualization. Quintilian provides a sketchy account of how language may be used to produce vivid descriptions. He observes that in order for a statement that a town was stormed to move hearers, it must be expanded so that the audience sees flames pouring from houses and temples, hears the crash of falling roofs and the confused clamor of cries, and so on (VIII.iii.67). He asserts that events which commonly occur—though they might not in fact have occurred—can be added to the description since simply giving the impression of truth through use of detail produces vivacity (VIII.iii.70). In addition to examples of vivid description, Quintilian offers this advice: "Fix your eyes on nature and follow

⁷This aspect of Cicero's rhetorical theory (among many others) may have philosophical grounding. Vasaly has pointed to aspects of Cicero's philosophy in *Academica* which may have influenced his treatment of vivid description in rhetorical theory. From Cicero's arguments in *Academica* it may be inferred that "ancient orators who, like Cicero, were familiar with both Greek philosophical and rhetorical theory might have seen in the technique of *evidentia* a verbal counterpart to the sensory reception of clear and striking images. While no one could claim that a listener might mistake the mental image created by verbal description for the visual experience of an existing object or objects, the use of the concept of clarity or *enargeia* to describe both *visiones* hints at the belief that these two avenues to the memory and emotions had a similarly potent effect" (*Representations*, p. 94).

her." ("Naturam intueamus hanc sequamus"; VIII.iii.71.)

In his discussion of the brilliant style, Cicero offers a somewhat less vague account of how vivid language is produced. The brilliant style is achieved by using dignified and metaphorical words, and using words "in exaggeration and adjectivally and in duplication and synonymously and in harmony with the actual action and the representation of the facts" ("superlata et adnomen adiuncta et duplicata et idem significantia atque ab ipsa actione atque imitatione rerum non abhorrentia"; *De partitione oratoria*, vi.20). Rather than attempting to describe the nature of the language used to create vivid descriptions, *Ad Herennium* provides three models of *descriptio* (IV.xxxix.51) and one of *demonstratio* (IV.lv.68). Though examples of vivid description are more useful than precepts alone, it may be illuminating to supplement the examples with discussion of how details are selected and made vivid in order to achieve rhetorical aims.

There may be at least three explanations for why the treatises neither include such a discussion nor provide systematic theorizing about vivid description. Perhaps the most obvious is that these rhetoricians were generally concerned more with systematizing invention than style. Another is that vivid description was treated at the early stages of a student's education. The exercise in the *progymnasmata* that most resembles a precursor of vivid description is *ekphrasis*, or "a vivid verbal picture of some thing."⁸ Vivacity became a direct concern in declamations where description was intended to embellish fables. As such, it was considered less a persuasive tool than "a valuable asset to an orator keen on showmanship."⁹ Because *ekphrasis* had less value for argument than entertainment, and because this technique had become so pervasive in declamations, Quintilian does not include *ekphrasis* as one of the preliminary exercises in a student's rhetorical education.¹⁰

Ekphrasis is included in the *Progymnasmata* of Aphthonius

⁸Thomas M. Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition* (New York: Longman, 1990), p. 31.

⁹Stanley F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977), p. 255.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 270.

about three centuries later.¹¹ Aphthonius asserts that “it is necessary for those who describe to produce the representation in a relaxed [*aneimenos*] style, but ornamented with a variety of figures, and, in short, to represent faithfully the things being described.”¹² Aphthonius illustrates this technique with a description of the Acropolis at Alexandria—an example that seems concerned with accuracy more than vivacity. This emphasis on accuracy is not surprising given that the aim of the exercise is faithful representation. Accurate description would assist future orators in the statement of facts, though it would probably not in and of itself produce the emotional response of vivid description. Vivacity may not have been featured in this exercise because vivacity was considered as a means of amplification and was therefore rehearsed in other exercises.

One such exercise was that of the commonplace, which provided an opportunity for students to practice using vivid description as a persuasive technique. Vivid description was the final step in an attack on an evil-doer, in which the speaker reinforces that no mercy should be shown.¹³ This exercise would prepare future orators for arousing *indignatio*. Another early exercise that allowed students to practice using vivid description as a persuasive technique may have been the refutation and confirmation (*anaskeue* and *kataskeue*) of the narrative, in which students composed an essay arguing the likelihood of a given narrative. The practical utility of this exercise is clear, as Stanley Bonner explains: “In criminal

¹¹George Kennedy calls this the “most important of the handbooks of *progymnasmata*” (*Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983], p. 59). Because its presentation of exercises is systematic and complete, and because such exercises had been used from at least the time of the fifth century sophists and are referred to by Roman rhetoricians (*ibid.*, pp. 54–55), this work may provide insight into the nature of *ekphrasis* in ancient Roman education.

¹²“The *Progymnasmata* of Aphthonius,” trans. Ray Nadeau, *Speech Monographs* 19 (1952): 264–85, trans. revised by Patricia P. Matsen and rpt. in *Readings from Classical Rhetoric*, eds. Patricia P. Matsen, Philip Rollinson, and Marion Sousa (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), p. 282.

¹³Bonner describes this commonplace as “a short, dramatic description of the offender actually committing the crime, which thus leaves the audience with a vivid picture, calculated suitably to horrify their minds and ensure a verdict of condemnation” (*Education*, p. 264).

cases, both in the rhetoric schools and in the courts, considerations of likelihood came very much to the fore when tangible evidence was limited or lacking."¹⁴ Students therefore could practice using vivid description to produce plausibility, a function which is also referred to by Theon in his *Progymnasmata*.¹⁵

A third explanation for the absence of detailed theoretical treatment of vivid description in the handbooks may be the complexity of vivid description. On the one hand, it serves several sometimes overlapping purposes: persuading about an issue of fact or quality by arousing emotion, promoting identification, and explaining and emphasizing importance in the narration. On the other hand, it may select details and use language in many different ways to render scenes vivid for different purposes. Nonetheless, as Ann Vasaly has observed, the "proliferation of terms and categories of treatment" regarding vivid description seems to indicate "that Latin rhetoricians and orators well understood the importance of using this kind of description but were unsure how to define it precisely and how to integrate it into the received structure of rhetorical theory."¹⁶ To begin identifying how language can promote visualization of scenes and how it can do so to achieve different rhetorical ends, the vivid descriptions of Cicero's *Verrine* orations will be examined once the speeches are justified as a source for generalizations about the technique.

Because the speeches of the *Actio secunda* were published but

¹⁴Ibid., p. 263.

¹⁵Theon's account of this virtue has been paraphrased by Bonner as follows: "Plausibility is obtained by envisaging the events from the point of view of the persons, the occasion, and the place concerned, and describing actions or reactions according to what seemed most *likely* to have happened. Even small details could sometimes be remarkably convincing and true to life" (*Education*, pp. 262-63). The focus on likelihood rather than accuracy, and on small details that are convincing rather than simply vivid, reinforces the hypothesis that a more complete account of vivid description is not included in the rhetorical handbooks since the technique was treated at an earlier stage of education.

¹⁶*Representations*, p. 90.

never delivered,¹⁷ their status as oral and rhetorical discourse has been questioned. The excess of emotional appeals and elaborate ornamentation, and the dearth of coherent argumentation have been treated as signs that the speeches were designed to be primarily literary rather than persuasive.¹⁸ Such views imply that vivid description in these speeches serves primarily literary rather than rhetorical aims. However, to view the speeches like this is to overlook not only Cicero's intentions but also his extraordinary rhetorical achievement.

That Cicero wanted the undelivered speeches to be viewed as orations is established by his publication of them as orations rather

¹⁷The *Verrine* orations consist of the *Divinatio* and *In Verrem*. The *Divinatio* is a speech in which Cicero makes the case that he, not Caecilius, should prosecute Verres for crimes committed against Rome and its allies. The *In Verrem* is Cicero's prosecution speech, composed of the *Actio prima* and *Actio secunda*. The *Actio prima* was actually delivered and strong enough for the defense to admit defeat before the five speeches of the *Actio secunda* could be delivered. Though never delivered, the *Actio secunda* was published with the rest of the speeches. The circumstances of the trial are detailed in George Kennedy's *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World: 300 B.C.-A.D. 300* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 156-62.

¹⁸Frank Cowles has observed that "a careful perusal [of the speeches of the *Actio secunda*] reveals the fact that they are intended not primarily for a jury, but for the great public. . . . [T]he arguments are often illogical, their arrangement is many times faulty, and their appeal is to prejudice rather than to reason" ("Gaius Verres: An Historical Study," *Cornell Studies in Classical Philology* 20 [1917]: 190). Richard Enos has pointed to the lack of structure in these speeches as a symptom of their intent to be read rather than heard: "Cicero may have considered these latter 'speeches' as little more than briefs composed and polished for publication and not requiring the rigorous schematization evident in the previously delivered litigation speeches" ("Heuristic Structures of *Dispositio* in Oral and Written Rhetorical Composition: An Addendum to Ochs' Analysis of the *Verrine* Orations," *Central States Speech Journal* 35 [1984]: 82). George Kennedy has described the vivid descriptions of these three speeches as seeming to be a "wasted or negative effort. Cicero is no longer faced with any real rhetorical problem and he has no goal but to demonstrate his versatility. The speeches are a denunciation of a man defeated and exiled, whose crimes are long since proved, though hardly atoned" (*Roman*, p. 165). Further, Kennedy describes them as "splendidly and grossly Roman: vast in size and elaborate in detail, colorful, vivid and sensational, ethical and emotional, guilty and vindictive, unnecessary, but impressive. The development of rhetoric from an art of persuasion to an art of expression is evident" (*ibid.*, p. 165).

than historical monographs¹⁹ and his adoption of the pretense of actual delivery, both by referring to people such as Verres and Apronius as if they were actually present and by mentioning possible lines of defense for them.²⁰ That Cicero planned to use vivid description for primarily rhetorical purposes is shown in the delivered speeches by his discussion of the need for and use of vivid language. In the *Divinatio* Cicero identifies vivid description as a technique Caecilius would have to master in order to defeat Hortensius, Verres' advocate: "[You must] set forth in detail the whole history of another man's life. [You must] not only make it clear to the understanding of the court: [you must] draw the picture so vividly that the whole of the audience can see it with their own eyes." ("Vitam alterius totam explicare, atque eam non modo in animis iudicum sed etiam in oculis conspectuque omnium exponere"; 27.)

Cicero illustrates his skillful use of vivid language later in the speech when he describes how Caecilius might respond to Hortensius' rhetorical skills:

Te vero, Caecili, quem ad modum sit elusurus, quam omni ratione iactaturus, videre iam videor. . . . Quid cum accusationis tuae membra dividere coeperit, et in digitis suis singulas partes causae constituere? Quid cum unum quidque transigere, expedire, absolvere? . . . Mihi enim videtur periculum fore ne ille non modo verbis te obruat, sed gestu ipso ac motu corporis praestringat aciem ingenii tui. . . . (45-46)²¹

(But as for you, Caecilius, I can see already, in my mind's eye, how he

¹⁹As Kennedy has noted, "Cicero of course could have written an account of Verres in an historical monograph, but he found the oratorical form the most natural, and it was an oratorical reputation which he desired" (ibid., pp. 162-63).

²⁰Ibid., p. 164; and Vasaly, *Representations*, p. 208.

²¹This passage, of course, is technically an example of apostrophe. The handbooks comment that apostrophe can use vivid details to create indignation against an opponent (*Ad Herennium*, IV.xv.22; *Institutio oratoria*, IX.ii.38-39), and the examples of apostrophe provided in *Ad Herennium* are particularly vivid. This paper considers vivid description as a rhetorical technique distinct from apostrophe and therefore does not treat the many passages of apostrophe in the *Verrine* orations as vivid descriptions. The passage just quoted, though not an instance of vivid description in its strictest sense, nonetheless displays Cicero's proficient use of language to promote visualization.

will outwit you, and make sport of you in a hundred ways. . . . Think of it, when he begins to subdivide your speech for the prosecution, and tick off with his fingers the separate sections of your case! Think of it, when he proceeds to smash them up, and clear them away, and polish them off one after the other! . . . I cannot help feeling the risk that he will not only beat you down with his arguments, but dazzle and confuse your senses with his mere gestures and bodily movements. . . .)

This passage not only prejudices auditors against Caecilius by revealing his potential weaknesses, but also strengthens Cicero's position by exhibiting the rhetorical skill Cicero needs for defeating Hortensius.²² The *Divinatio*, then, provides good reasons for believing that Cicero intended to use vivid description in narrating the history of Verres' public life for primarily persuasive purposes.

Cicero uses this strategy in the *Actio prima*. This speech is in part structured as a kind of narrative of the crimes Verres committed while holding various public offices and his attempts to influence the outcome of the present trial. Cicero uses vivid description in narrating the scene in which, upon Hortensius' election, Gaius Curio congratulates Verres on his virtual acquittal since Hortensius would be in a position to fix the trial (18-19). That this is the only vivid description in the speech may be accounted for by the circumstances of the trial. Cicero had to present the case quickly—before the courts adjourned for fall festivals and before important positions in the government and court were occupied by people sympathetic to Verres; therefore, the first speech includes statements of fact and presentation of evidence with minimal argumentation and amplification. Nonetheless, Cicero concludes the speech by mentioning that “if there is anyone who regrets the absence of the continuous speech for the prosecution, he shall hear it in the second part of the trial” (“si quis erit qui perpetuam orationem accusationemque desideret, altera actione audiet”; 55). This disclaimer for not meeting the audience's expectations suggests that the *Actio secunda* would provide an occasion for Cicero to meet

²²Cf. Christopher P. Craig's argument that Cicero's use of dilemma in the *Divinatio* is a way not only to prevent Caecilius from responding but also to demonstrate that Cicero's oratorical powers are equal to those of Hortensius (“Dilemma in Cicero's *Divinatio* in Caecilius,” *American Journal of Philology* 106 [1985]: 442-46).

these expectations. The wealth of vivid description in the later speeches as compared to its limited use in the *Actio secunda*, then, may actually be more expected than exceptional.

This is not to say that the *Actio secunda* is ordinary; on the contrary, it shows Cicero's extraordinary rhetorical skill. Cicero had to present an enormous amount of evidence in a manner that was coherent and would hold the audience's attention. These considerations would be important whether the speeches were heard or read, and the latter consideration is particularly important for a reading audience given the absence of an exigence and speaker.

Cicero's organization of much of the material into narrations illustrates his rhetorical genius.²³ If Cicero had arranged the material of each speech in the prescribed manner of introduction, narration, proof, and conclusion, it would have been virtually incomprehensible to an audience. As Vasaly has observed, "no listener (or reader) could have been expected to assimilate it . . . for the bewildering amount of data that Cicero would have been obliged to cover in the narration of each would surely have been forgotten or confused by the time he returned to it in the argument and peroration."²⁴ She concludes that Cicero's use of narration is not artificial or literary but rather "the only possible manner in which Cicero

²³Donovan Ochs has termed Cicero's rhetorical strategy "rhetorical detailing" ("Rhetorical Detailing in Cicero's *Verrine Orations*," *Central States Speech Journal* 33 [1982]: 311), and Vasaly has described the narrations of the fourth part of the *Actio secunda* as "miniature dramas with a beginning, middle, and end" (*Representations*, p. 125). (Her observation holds true for the other speeches as well.) It should also be noted that both Ochs and Vasaly distinguish Cicero's strategy from literary narrative or drama. Ochs' observation that "the speech reads more like an extended and continuous peroration than anything else" ("Rhetorical Detailing," p. 311) echoes Quintilian's characterization of the orations as an example of a rhetorical technique labeled by the Greeks as *merikoi epilogoi*, "by which they mean a peroration distributed among different portions of a speech" ("quo partitam perorationem significant"; VI.i.54-55). Likewise, Vasaly observes that Cicero ends the narratives or dramas not with a denouement but "a kind of argument and peroration. Such a strategy is predictable, given the fact that the orator, unlike the dramatist, must avoid the sense of closure and recovered equilibrium provided by the dramatic denouement. He strives, instead, to convince his audience at the end of each narrative of the justice of his position, to rouse them to emotional engagement with this position, and to make them eager to hear another example of the accused's misdeeds" (*Representations*, p. 127).

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 125.

could have effectively organized such an extensive mass of evidence."²⁵ Donovan Ochs has also pointed to Cicero's skill in organizing the material. He notes that "proof, in the sense of the school rhetorics, gives way to characterization. Narration replaces argumentation."²⁶ By presenting the material in this manner, Cicero moves beyond the school rhetorics to adapt his case to the circumstances effectively.

Included in these circumstances is the absence of an exigence—the political crisis has passed and Verres is in exile. Cicero did not have to prove Verres' guilt but rather, as Vasaly has put it, "make Verres' guilt matter."²⁷ Moreover, he had to rely on words alone to make the guilt matter since there would be no delivery to heighten their impact. Stylistic devices such as vivid description would heighten readers' interest in and feeling about Verres' atrocities and, by creating a sense of immediacy, help compensate for the absence of delivery as a medium for conveying emotion.

But the greater use of vivid description in the *Actio secunda* than in the *Divinatio* and *Actio prima* cannot simply be viewed as a sign that the speeches were meant to be read rather than heard. The rhetorical treatises suggest that stylistic features such as vivid description would almost certainly be included in the *Verrine* orations if delivered. In *De oratore* Cicero observes that speakers must choose "the style of oratory best calculated to hold the attention of the audience, and not merely to give them pleasure but also to do so without giving them too much of it" ("genus . . . dicendi est eligendum quod maxime teneat eos qui audiant et quod non solum delectet sed etiam sine satietate delectet"; III.xxv.97). Similarly, Quintilian warns against excessive brevity in the narration or, put differently, a bare presentation of the facts of a case: "Pleasure beguiles the attention, and that which delights us ever seems less long, just as a picturesque and easy journey tires us less for all its length than a difficult shortcut through an arid waste." ("Fallit voluptas et minus longa quae delectant videntur, ut amoenum ac molle iter, etiamsi est spatii amplioris, minus fatigat quam durum

²⁵Ibid., p. 209, n. 24.

²⁶"Rhetorical Detailing," p. 311.

²⁷*Representations*, p. 110.

aridumque compendium"; IV.ii.46.)²⁸ Since holding the attention of both a listening and reading audience would be a consideration in speeches the length of the *Verrine* orations, the vivid descriptions in the speeches would probably be present if they had actually been delivered.

In addition to holding the audience's attention, vivid description is particularly suited to the presentation of the subject matter. Most of the material is presented in narrative form, and Cicero and Quintilian comment that narration is best when it both pleases and persuades. Cicero asserts that narrative is best when it is "entertaining and convincing" ("ut iucunda et ad persuadendum"; *De oratore*, II.lxxx.326), that to clarity and persuasiveness "we also add charm" ("assumimus etiam suavitatem"; *De partitione oratoria*, IX.31), and Quintilian observes that a judge is "all the more ready to accept what charms his ear and is lured by pleasure to belief" ("credit facilius, quae audienti iucunda sunt, et voluptate ad fidem ducitur"; IV.ii.119). For the Romans, the "literary" features are virtually necessary features of persuasive discourse. Cicero's extraordinary rhetorical achievement in the *Verrine* orations is due in part to his use of vivid descriptions which may entertain but primarily contribute to persuasion.

How vivid descriptions contribute to the rhetorical aims of the *Verrine* orations will become clearer once the speeches are examined in order to identify their recurrent features and to suggest why these features were used. Because the sine qua non of vivid description is vivacity, the features that may be designed to promote visualization are first identified. How such details may have been selected is then suggested. Finally, recurrent features that seem to contribute less to vivacity than to the role of the vivid description in persuasion are examined.

Vivid descriptions do not exclusively or even primarily rely on figurative language or descriptive terms such as adjectives and adverbs to promote visualization. With few exceptions, these features are generally absent from vivid descriptions. Excessive use of such features would call attention to the technique because they

²⁸Cicero's recommendations regarding brevity in the narration are similar (*De oratore*, II.lxxx.326-28).

would significantly depart from ordinary language use. Instead, vivid descriptions rely more on the portrayal of scenes with particularity; that is, speakers and writers promote visualization more by noting particular features such as actions and objects (seize, fling, rods, statues) than by describing the actions and objects (quickly, stiffly, black, huge).

Before examining the features which may promote visualization, it is important to note that vivid descriptions do not rely only on appeals to sight. General auditory details such as weeping and wailing can be used to arouse pity²⁹ and indignation.³⁰ Specific auditory details—such as Rubrius' asking for the presence of Philodamus' daughter, on whom Verres has indecent designs, which silences the "general buzz of talk and merriment" (*"omnium sermone laetitiae"*; II.i.66) of a banquet—may be intended to perform a similar role.³¹ Certain sounds may arouse emotion as effectively as sights. Sounds may also lend plausibility to a narration by serving as circumstantial evidence. Cicero suggests that the scene in which Gaius Curio spotted Verres in the crowd, "called out to him, and congratulated him loudly" (*"appellat hominem et ei voce maxima gratulatur"*; I.19) is evidence that Verres has attempted to interfere with the outcome of the trial.

Though auditory details are often included in vivid descriptions, the senses of smell and touch are appealed to only infrequently. To prejudice auditors against Apronius, one of Verres' tax gatherers, Cicero asserts that "the disgusting smell of the man's breath and body, which we are told not even animals could endure, to [Verres], and to him alone, seemed sweet and pleasant" (*"postremo ut odor Apronii taeterrimus oris et corporis, quem, ut aiunt, ne bestiae quidem ferre possent, uni isti suavis et iucundus videretur"*; II.iii.23). To create pity for Sopater, Cicero notes the man's agony from being "bound naked to the metal surface [of a statue] amid all the rain and cold" (*"vinctus nudus in aere, in imbri, in frigore"*; II.iv.87). Because sight was held to be the most vivid sense and because the sight of scenes may more often promote the response for which the speaker aims than, for example, the sounds and smells of a scene, the recurrent features of vivid

²⁹See II.i.76, II.iv.47, II.iv.52, II.iv.76, and II.iv.110.

³⁰See II.ii.47, II.iv.87, II.v.94, and II.v.106.

³¹See also II.i.59, II.iii.62, II.iii.69, II.v.17, II.v.31, and II.v.162.

descriptions tend to include primarily visual details.

Since vivid descriptions by definition describe actions, it is not surprising that a central feature of vivid description is movement. Some actions are forceful and may therefore readily promote visualization, such as when Verres orders Gavius “to be flung down, stripped naked and tied up in the open market-place” (“proripi atque in foro medio nudari ac deligari”; II.v.161).³² Noting forceful actions, however, may be less a matter of cultivating rhetorical technique than—to paraphrase Quintilian—of fixing your eyes on nature and following her.

Simply noting actions may not always be sufficient for promoting visualization. It may also be necessary to particularize actions with objects. Examples of this strategy include the following: the jug of boiling water that drenches Rubrius when he requests the presence of Philodamus’ daughter (II.i.67), the wild olive tree from which Nymphodorus is hung (II.iii.51), the garlands and flowers, and burning incense and spices which the women of Segesta use to cover the statue of Diana as it is stolen from their land (II.iv.77), and the clubs and cudgels used to beat the temple guards (II.iv.94). None of these objects is actually described in detail, but each of them may nevertheless promote visualization by particularizing actions. Again to paraphrase Quintilian, saying people entered by force must be expanded so the audience sees that “the locks were being wrenched off and the doors burst open” (“ecfringi multorum fores, revelli claustra”; II.iv.52).

In addition to making actions seem more vivid by describing them with particularity, Cicero also seems to attempt to promote visualization by noting that actions occur suddenly (“repente”). Sudden actions include the uproar provoked when an item of a report is read (II.ii.47), the arrival at a temple of a body of armed slaves (II.iv.94) and the attack upon them by a body of townsfolk (II.iv.95), and Verres’ order for Gavius to be flogged (II.v.161).³³ Sudden actions may promote visualization because they foreground the action; events that occur suddenly are more noticeable than those that evolve slowly.

The sudden occurrence of events may be a species of a more

³²See also *Divinatio* 45, II.iii.57, and II.iv.86.

³³See also II.ii.75, II.ii.187, II.iv.66, II.v.11, II.v.87, II.v.91, and II.v.106.

general strategy of creating vivacity through contrast. In the same way as a sudden action may stand out against or contrast with a static scene or linear course of events, so, too, may other aspects of a scene seem more vivid through contrast. The contribution of contrast to vivacity is perhaps best illustrated by a passage of vivid description somewhat analogous to Aphthonius' illustration of *ekphrasis*, the description of the Acropolis at Alexandria—Cicero's description of the ravaged Sicilian landscape. Unlike Aphthonius' description, however, Cicero's is vivid. It may be vivid not only because of the details included, but also because of the contrast established between the landscape before and after Verres' corrupt practices in connection with the corn tax. Cicero describes what he saw: "The fields and the hill-sides that I had once seen green and flourishing I now saw devastated and deserted" ("Quos ego campos antea collesque nitidissimos viridissimosque vidissem, hos ita vastatos nunc ac desertos videbam"); land that was "richly cultivated" ("cultissimus") is now "so wild and miserable a waste" ("deformis atque horridus"; II.iii.47). The devastation is intended to arouse indignation, but rather than relying on the devastation alone to bring the scene before the mind's eye, Cicero contrasts the devastation with signs of life—green, flourishing, and cultivated. The absence of life described by Cicero may become more vivid when contrasted with the signs of life usually seen.

Another contrast Cicero employs is that between night and day, darkness and light. Instances of this contrast include Cicero's description of "the darkness" ("tenebrae") of prison which prevents people from seeing "the common light of day" ("communi luce"; II.v.23) and Verres' appearance on shore after a night of pirate attacks "as daylight was breaking" ("lucebat iam fere"; II.v.94).³⁴ A variation on this is the contrast between night and fire, such as when "on one and the same night we see the Roman governor burning with the vile fires of lust, and the Roman fleet with the flames that those pirates kindled" ("una atque eadem nox erat qua praetor amoris turpissimi flamma, classis populi Romani praedonum incendio conflagrabat"; II.v.92).³⁵ These contrasts may be an inadvertent outcome of noting the time of the scene or of suggest-

³⁴See also II.i.46, II.v.26, II.v.114, and II.v.160.

³⁵See also II.i.69 and II.v.129.

ing the clandestine or open nature of the actions, but they may also serve as a strategy for promoting visualization since light is more apparent when contrasted with darkness.

Light is used to promote visualization not only of scenes in general but also of objects. The few vivid descriptions of objects in the speeches are confined to art works Verres has stolen. The lampstand meant for Jupiter's temple is made of "the most brilliant and beautiful stones" ("clarissimis et pulcherrimis gemmis"; II.iv.65); the mouth and chin of a Hercules statue are "quite noticeably rubbed from the way in which people, when praying or offering thanks, not only do reverence to it but actually kiss it" ("paulo sit attritus, quod in precibus et gratulationibus non solum id venerari verum etiam osculari solent"; II.iv.94). These works are rendered vivid through descriptions not of their forms or features such as size and color, but rather by how light reflects off of them. Describing the forms and features might have been superfluous to the case and to an audience who was probably well acquainted with lampstands and images of Hercules. Light is the feature here that promotes visualization without calling attention to the technique of vivid description.

Cicero may have selected these objects to describe in some detail because they are central to the emotional response that the vivid description seems designed to elicit; stealing valuable and venerated works arouses indignation.³⁶ Most objects in the descriptions are not vividly described; we do not know, for example, if there was a design on the jug of boiling water that drenches Rubrius. Some objects—such as statues, wild palm roots, rods, the cross—may need no description. Simply their presence and the use to which they are put in the scenes described—to rob, mock, beat, or crucify the citizens of Rome and her allies—are sufficient for promoting visualization and an emotional response.

Details to include in vivid descriptions may be selected not

³⁶In her discussion of Cicero's use of description of statues and monuments not actually visible to the audience during the speech, Vasaly has noted that in referring to these objects Cicero called upon historical, political, and religious meanings such objects would have for his audience, or upon the value and artistry of such objects (*Representations*, pp. 104-28). The details Cicero uses to describe these objects, then, are not chosen simply with an eye to promoting visualization but to orchestrating an emotional response designed to achieve rhetorical aims.

only for their ability to promote visualization or an emotional response, but also to lead auditors to a particular conclusion on the basis of circumstantial evidence.³⁷ The embrace between Gaius Curio and Verres suggests corruption in the trial (I.19); Verres' shifting back and forth is a physical indication of the fear and guilt which promote his indecision (II.ii.74), implying that his conviction of Sopater is unjust; that Carpinatius "hesitated, shuffled, went red in the face" ("haerere . . . versari, rubere"; II.ii.187) suggests he is guilty of forgeries apparently discovered by Cicero. The importance of selecting telling details highlights the role of vivid description in the rhetorical—not only or even primarily literary—aspects of the case.

In sum, vivid descriptions are produced not so much by describing as by noting the particulars of scenes. Though auditory details as well as details that appeal to senses other than sight are sometimes used, most details appeal to sight. Rhetoricians promote visualization by noting forceful actions, particularizing actions with objects, and contrasting features of the scene—particularly light and darkness. Details are selected for their ability not only to promote visualization but also to heighten an emotional response and suggest plausibility. Clearly, then, vivid descriptions are not simply stylistic flourishes but contributions to persuasion.

Two additional recurrent features of vivid descriptions—a verbal cue to imagine³⁸ and the presence of a crowd—may also promote visualization but are more interesting for how they may contribute to belief. A cue to imagine can take at least two forms: instructing auditors to imagine or telling auditors that the speaker is imagining. Cicero instructs auditors to imagine when he commands, "mark now" ("videte"; II.iv.77).³⁹ He tells auditors he is

³⁷Cf. Vasaly, who has suggested that Cicero's use of aspects of the environment—whether visible to the audience or not—may have functioned as a kind of inartificial proof like documents or testimony (*Representations*, pp. 25, 254-55).

³⁸The author wishes to acknowledge gratefully the influence of Christopher Collins and his *Reading the Written Image* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991) and *The Poetics of the Mind's Eye* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991) on her understanding of this notion of how different forms of language may cue mental responses, and on her interest in and understanding of imagination in general.

³⁹Additional instances of this form may be found at II.i.45, II.iii.22, II.iv.47, II.iv.52, and II.v.170.

imagining when he says an image appears “before my eyes” (“ante oculos”; II.iv.110).⁴⁰

When Cicero instructs auditors to imagine, he appears to do so in order, first, to attract the audience’s attention. Cicero instructs auditors to “note the method of punishment” (“genus animadversionis videte”) before he begins this brief description: “He ordered a fire of moist-green wood to be made in a confined spot: and there this free-born man, a man of high rank in his town, one of the allies and friends of Rome, was put through the agonies of suffocation, and left there more dead than alive.” (“Ignem ex lignis viridibus atque humidis in loco angusto fieri iussit; ibi hominem ingenuum, domi nobilem, populi Romani socium atque amicum, fumo excruciatum semivivum reliquit”; II.i.45.) Because the description of this scene is brief and the only instance Cicero gives here of the cruel punishments Verres inflicts on those who refuse his extortion demands, a cue may be necessary to gain the auditors’ attention with the promise of an important point described vividly.

⁴⁰Additional instances of this form may be found at *Divinatio* 45, II.i.58, II.iii.46, and II.v.123. This form may cue auditors to imagine because it derives from a shared conception of the imagination. This conception is suggested when Quintilian recommends that speakers envision a scene in order to arouse their own emotions.

Quas phantasias Graeci vocant, nos sane visiones appellemus, per quas imagines rerum absentium ita repraesentantur animo, ut eas cernere oculis ac praesentes habere videamur. Has quisquis bene conceperit, is erit in adfectibus potentissimus. . . . Insequitur enargeia, quae a Cicerone illustratio et evidentia nominatur, quae non tam dicere videtur quam ostendere; et adfectus non aliter, quam si rebus ipsis intersimus, sequentur. (VI.ii.29-30 and VI.ii.32)

(There are certain experiences which the Greeks call *phantasia*, and the Romans *visions*, whereby things absent are presented to an imagination with such extreme vividness that they seem actually to be before our very eyes. It is the man who is really sensitive to such impressions who will have the greatest power over the emotions. . . . From such impressions arises that *enargeia* which Cicero calls illumination and actuality, which makes us seem not so much to narrate as to exhibit the actual scene, while our emotions will be no less actively stirred than if we were present at the actual occurrence.)

This shared conception of how the imagination works may also cue auditors to imagine when the speaker asks them to remember. For a discussion of vivid description in the context of ideas about perception and imagination at this time, see Vasaly, *Representations*, pp. 91-102.

Second, Cicero appears to instruct auditors to imagine in order to promote identification with or sympathy for individuals. Cicero seems to attempt to arouse pity when he describes the following scene in which a father and son are unjustly executed:

Constituitur in foro Laodiceae spectaculum acerbum et miserum et grave toti Asiae provinciae. . . . Flebat uterque non de suo supplicio, sed pater de filii morte, de patris filius. Quid lacrimarum ipsum Neronem putatis profudisse? quem fletum totius Asiae fuisse? quem luctum et gemitum Lampsacenorum. (II.i.76)⁴¹

(In the forum of Laodicia a cruel scene was enacted, which caused all the province of Asia profound unhappiness and distress. . . . Both wept, but neither for his own doom: the father for his son's fate, the son for his father's. Imagine the tears that Nero himself must have shed, the sorrow of all Asia, the grief and loud lamentations of the people of Lampsacum.)

Indignation may also be heightened by a verbal cue to imagine, as when Cicero asks the audience to "mark the villain's [Verres'] shamelessness" ("videte hominis audaciam") in his crucifixion of a Roman citizen where "all who came or went that way by sea must pass close by it" ("praetervectione omnium qui ultro citroque navigarent"; II.v.170). However, as will be discussed below, a verbal cue is used more often in scenes designed to arouse pity than indignation.

A third reason Cicero instructs auditors to imagine may be to suggest his candor. The Romans were doubtlessly suspicious of

⁴¹That pity is intended to be solicited through identification with the people in the scene is suggested by Quintilian. He mentions this scene as an example of arousing emotions in the narration and suggests that it produces an emotional response through identification: auditors are moved to tears when Cicero "describes, or rather shows us as in a picture, the father weeping for the death of his son and the son for the death of his father" ("non tam narraret quam ostenderet patrem de morte filii, filium de patris"; IV.ii.114). The tears of father and son move the audience to tears. See also II.iv.47, II.iv.52, and II.iv.77, in which vivid description of the victims of thefts seems designed to produce pity.

the kind of bombastic speech commonly termed “rhetoric” today.⁴² Instructions to imagine may be a token of the speaker’s sincerity and a way of flattering the jurors; the verbal cue signals that the speaker has no verbal tricks up his sleeve, that he is not attempting to deceive the jurors either because he is sincere or because they are too sophisticated to be taken in by amplification rather than argumentation.⁴³ This particular use of the verbal cue also points to the rhetorical nature of vivid description. If poets or novelists explicitly cued readers to imagine, they would probably be considered untalented or at least unskilled. Stylistic features generally need no apology in literary discourse. In persuasive discourse, in contrast, a disclaimer for nonrational appeals may be necessary, since “ideally” conviction is earned through rational appeals. Cicero may be concerned with an appearance of candor when he prefaces a scathing attack on the character of Apronius (II.iii.22-23) because it is clearly designed to prejudice auditors against him through vivid details such as his odor.

The second form of a verbal cue to imagine—Cicero telling auditors he is imagining or remembering—seems to be used for reasons similar to instructions to imagine. Cicero’s statement in the *Divinatio* that he “can see already, in my mind’s eye” (“videre iam videor”; 45) may be a way of both calling attention to his skillful use of vivid language and indicating his candor as he attacks Caecilius’ skills by imagining what could rather than what did happen. Similarly, the visions arising from memories reported by the speaker may also lend credibility and plausibility to the events.

⁴²Such a suspicion may be inferred by Quintilian’s praise of Cicero’s *Pro Milone*, which “used the ordinary language of everyday speech and a careful concealment of his art. Had he spoken otherwise, his words would by their very sound have warned the judge to keep an eye on the advocate” (“sed verbis etiam vulgaribus et cotidianis et arte occulta consecutus est; quae si aliter dicta essent, strepitu ipso iudicem ad custodiendum patronum excitassent”; IV.ii.58).

⁴³Quintilian alludes to using this cue for reasons of candor in his discussion of using vivid description when imagining what might have happened or what will happen. He states that in the past, vivid descriptions that used *metastasis*—a transference of time—were prefaced by instructions to imagine (IX.ii.41). The need for modesty in such cases may arise from the fact that the description is not stating what actually happened but speculating, and that auditors are not unaware that vivid descriptions can deceptively create the impression of veracity; a detailed report may be more credible than a sketchy account.

Cicero's memory of the ravaged Sicilian landscape is a kind of testimony to the devastating effects of Verres' extortion (II.iii.47), his memory of the weeping eyes who gazed at the stolen works of art in the forum a testimony to the effects on the people of Verres' thefts (II.i.58-59).

Cicero's statement that he is imagining may also promote identification with the speaker himself. The picture of the effect of Verres' impious actions on the citizens of Henna which rises "before my eyes" ("ante oculos") arouses feelings that make Cicero's "body shake and tremble" ("corpore perhorrescam"; II.iv.110). His "imagination is stirred vividly" ("versatur mihi ante oculos") by the victims of "Verres' inhuman wickedness and his executioner's hideous axe" ("Verris nefariam immanitatem et ad eius funestam securem"; II.v.123). Not only the imagined scene itself but also the speaker's reaction to it may prompt an emotional response in the audience.

In sum, speakers may preface vivid descriptions with a verbal cue to imagine—either instructions to imagine or a statement that the speaker is imagining. These verbal cues may be used to attract the audience's attention to an important scene that will be briefly described, to promote identification with the emotions of the people in a scene or of the speaker, and to suggest the veracity of the scene described by virtue of the speaker's candor or presence at the scene.

Virtually all vivid descriptions include the presence of a crowd of people, either explicitly mentioned or implicitly suggested by locating the scene in the marketplace. Reasons for noting the presence of a crowd seem to overlap to some extent with those for using a verbal cue to imagine. First, the presence of a crowd lends credibility and plausibility to the scene being vividly described; the speaker sets before the mind's eye something that real eyes have seen. Belief may be attributed by jurors not to bombastic speech but to an implication that hundreds—perhaps thousands—of people could provide corroboration.⁴⁴ Cicero explicitly suggests this reason when describing the scene in which Antiochus asserts that Verres has stolen from him a lampstand intended for Jupiter's tem-

⁴⁴Quintilian suggests in his discussion of the topic of place that the speaker attempting to prove a question of fact consider whether a place is crowded or deserted (V.x.37).

ple: after Cicero notes that this scene occurs “before a great gathering in the market-place at Syracuse” (“maximo conventu Syracusis in foro”), he remarks, “[I say this] lest I should by some chance be thought to be charging Verres with something of which no one knows, and building up a case out of circumstantial evidence” (“ne quis forte me in crimine obscuro versari atque affingere aliquid suspicione hominum arbitretur”; II.iv.67).⁴⁵ An impression of a disinterested narration may be created by not verbally cuing auditors to imagine scenes in which a crowd provides a kind of corroboration for the events described; failing to disguise apparent signs of amplification—such as a cue to imagine—could weaken a case that may already lack substantial evidence.

Second, the presence of a crowd may be noted in order to heighten the emotional impact of a scene. If pity alone or both pity and indignation are intended to be raised by a scene, the vivid description usually includes a verbal cue.⁴⁶ In scenes designed to arouse indignation, however, more often than not a crowd but not a verbal cue is used. The presence of a crowd may be designed to arouse indignation by signifying the public nature of an act.⁴⁷ A clear case is the vivid description of Verres’ thefts of statues with the whole of Aspendus watching (II.i.54). The assaults upon members of the community that occur in the marketplace—such as the scene in which Apronius “ordered [Nymphodorus, a farmer and landowner] to be seized and suspended from a wild olive-tree that grows in the market-place of Aetna” (“hominem corripui ac suspen-

⁴⁵Other instances of the presence of a crowd suggesting credibility include the vivid description of the discussion between Gaius Curio and Verres which implies Verres’ interference with the trial (I.19), Cicero copying a forged account book submitted as evidence of Verres’ bribery (II.ii.189), and the reported testimony of Roman citizens who blame the pirates’ victory over the Roman fleet on Verres exempting so many people from military service (II.v.100). Though they are not present in a scene being described, the Sicilians and Roman citizens who had seen Verres dressed in the fashion vividly described by Cicero serve as a kind of evidence regarding Verres’ neglect of his military duties (II.v.86). See also II.ii.74, II.v.17, and II.v.64.

⁴⁶See, for example, II.i.59, II.i.76, and II.iv.110.

⁴⁷Discussing how to arouse the emotions of the judges in the peroration in a case in which a client has been beaten, Quintilian notes that “the hatred excited by the act will be enhanced if it was committed in the theatre, in a temple, or at a public assembly” (“in theatro, in templo, in contione, crescit invidia”; VI.i.16).

di iussit in oleastro quodam, que est arbor, iudices, Aetnae in foro"; II.iii.57)—appear to be examples of vivid descriptions that attempt to arouse indignation by virtue in part of the presence of a crowd. Perhaps the most powerful vivid description of this sort is that of the crucifixion of a Roman citizen in the marketplace (II.v.162).⁴⁸

A verbal cue may not usually preface vivid descriptions of scenes designed to arouse indignation because auditors readily feel indignation with respect to blatant violations of their own community values, and readily identify with an indignant community who shares these values. To arouse pity, in contrast, it may be necessary to focus less on the community than on individual victims. A verbal cue may be more necessary in cases where the speaker wants the audience to identify with individuals, because the audience identifies with individuals less readily than communities.⁴⁹

Whether a vivid description of a scene is designed to arouse pity or indignation, the presence of a crowd may promote identification with the actors in a scene because the auditors themselves are in a crowd at the trial.⁵⁰ In *Brutus* Cicero describes the typical

⁴⁸Quintilian also mentions this scene as an example of arousing emotions in the narration, and notes that one feature of the scene which stirs emotions is "the place where the outrage was committed" ("loco iniuriae"; IV.ii.113). See also the vivid descriptions of assaults on Roman knights that occur in public (II.iii.60-62, II.iii.65), the scene in which Sopater, a high-ranking official in his community, is bound naked to the metal surface of a statue in the marketplace on a cold and rainy day (II.iv.86-87), the banquet scene in which Rubrius requests the presence of Philodamus' daughter (II.i.66), the scene in which people loudly protest the injustice of Verres using his power to rob a man in the name of the community (II.ii.47) and to arrest an innocent man for his own neglect of the Roman fleet (II.v.106), the crowds defending their temples from Verres' thefts (II.iv.94-96), prisoners previously sentenced to death being freed before the eyes of thousands (II.v.11), and the angry crowd rushing to Verres' house while the pirates burn the Roman fleet (II.v.92).

⁴⁹Cicero explicitly emphasizes that a scene may be indicative less of an assault on an individual than on shared values when he chastises Verres for crucifying a Roman citizen: "It was not Gavius, not one obscure man, whom you nailed upon that cross of agony: it was the universal principle that Romans are free men." ("Non tu hoc loco Gavius, non unum hominem nescio quem, sed communem libertatis et civitatis causam in illum cruciatum et crucem egisti"; II.v.170.) See also II.v.169.

⁵⁰Cicero's use of the physical environment in persuasion has been explored by Vasaly, *Representations*; see especially chapters 1 and 2.

trial setting in sensational cases such as that of Verres: "Let every place on the benches be taken, the judges' tribunal full, the clerks busy and obliging in assigning or giving up places, a listening crowd thronging about, the presiding judge erect and attentive." ("Locus in subselliis occupetur, compleatur tribunal, gratiosi scribae sint in dendo et cedendo loco, corona multiplex, iudex erectus.")⁵¹ Being in a crowd may lead auditors to visualize scenes involving crowds readily, as well as to identify with or experience the crowd's emotional state.

In sum, if vivid descriptions are not prefaced with a verbal cue to imagine, it may be necessary to note the presence of a crowd in order for the description of the events to be credible and to promote an emotional response. For the vivid description to produce pity for individuals, a verbal cue to imagine may be needed to promote identification; but to produce indignation at assaults on community values, it may be sufficient to note the presence of a crowd and perhaps their emotions. People may respond more readily to assaults on shared values than to assaults on individuals.

In conclusion, given the intricacy of the nature and ends of vivid description, it is not surprising that the ancient Roman theorists did not develop a fully systematic theory for producing and using vivid description. Nor has this paper presented a full theory. However, it has attempted to suggest how and for what purposes Cicero produces vivid descriptions. In doing so, it is hoped that some light has been shed on vivid description as a distinctive rhetorical technique.

⁵¹*Brutus*, trans. G. L. Hendrickson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), lxxxiv.290.